



SPOTLIGHT ON ESSEX COUNTY

Fall 2009/Winter 2010

Wind shapes the land

Rural life may never be the same

Adventure on the high seas

A soldier's story

**Two families share
a unique bond**

Excellence at centre ice



SPOTLIGHT ON ESSEX COUNTY

CEDAR CREEK
COVER PHOTO BY
JENNIFER CRANSTON

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16 Centre Street
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Phone: 519-776-4268
Fax: 519-776-4014
Email: essexfreepress@on.aibn.com
Website: www.essexfreepress.ca

PUBLISHER
Laurie Brett

EDITOR
Jennifer Cranston

ADVERTISING
Hollie Hutchins
Erin Squance

**CONTRIBUTING
WRITERS/PHOTOGRAPHERS**
Andy Comber
Kevin Wickham
Marc Rocheleau
Laurie Brett

PRODUCTION
Tom Warwick
Lana Garant

OFFICE
Cathy Campbell
Sarah Adams

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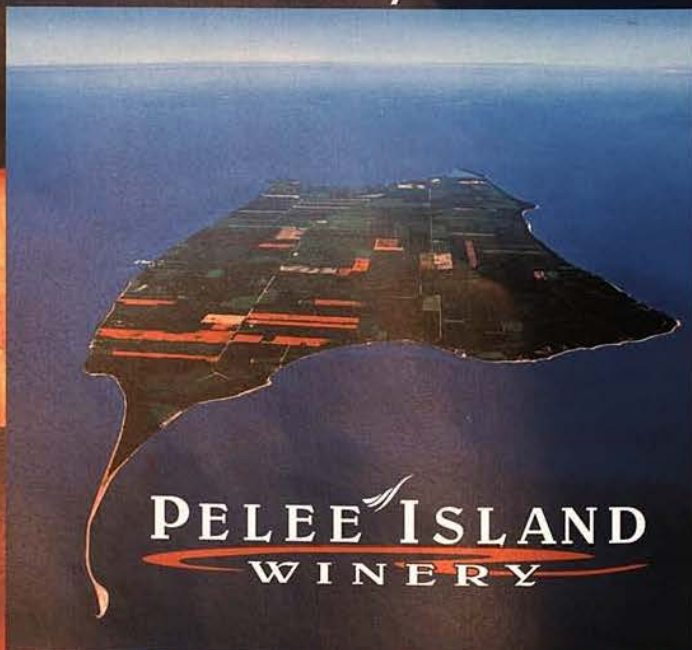
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Editor's Note

It is my pleasure to welcome you to the first issue of Spotlight on Essex County, a quarterly collection of stories and pictures that invite you to explore the county's triumphs and treasures, transitions and trials.

This magazine will shine a spotlight on the people that make up our community and explore the phenomena that give us our identity. As the creative minds behind Spotlight take their first steps on what is sure to be a long and exciting excursion into the fascinating details that make Essex County unique, join us on our first journey.

In this issue you will explore the migration of Jack Miner from hunter to protector to influential man of the world to historical icon. Discover how twin girls who might never have known each other, through miraculous coincidence and the commitment of two families, emigrated to Canada to become the centre of a unique extended family.

Let a young man who was suddenly faced with a life without sight, show you how he is making the transition to confidence in a life with barriers. Join a Canadian soldier in what should have been a simple trip across the Atlantic that became one of the events that helped to shape the person he has become years later.

Birders flock to the shores of Lake Erie every autumn to see countless birds make their way south. The information that raptors carry about the health of the planet's environmental health may surprise you. Explore the personal creative journey of local authors, find out why hockey is "our" sport and join the quest for justice in unsolved murders.

As the view outside your window passes from red and gold leaves to fluffy snowflakes, we invite you to cozy up in your favourite chair and enjoy a good read about your home and your community.

Jennifer Cranston
Editor

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WIND

shapes the new landscape

Rural life may never be the same

By Andy Comber

They appear on the horizon, stretching above the distant tree line, bright white in the afternoon sun. They command the open field.

Eye-catching blades cut through the air, pushed by the wind, each blade longer and heavier than the wing of a jumbo jet.

The word "massive" best describes them – electrical generators weighing more than a transport truck, suspended on 80-metre-high towers. They dwarf the hydro poles, too numerous to count, the lengths of wires stretching as far as the eye can see.

New to the countryside, these machines feed the power grid.

They are wind turbines.

Today they are the new landscape of Chatham-Kent. Tomorrow they will be the new landscape of Essex County.

Change is in the air.

The calm, quiet of the warm afternoon gives way to a breeze. For some, tonight will be a restless one among the wind turbines.

A wife and mother of two young children, Nikki Horton had always thought wind turbines were "cool". Having seen them elsewhere, she and her husband never opposed them and never attended a meeting to stop their spread around their home in the quiet countryside near Dealtown, a small community situated along the Talbot Trail between Point Pelee and Rondeau Provincial Park.

With the nearest turbine located over 600 metres away from her home, Horton said she was not worried as construction neared completion in late 2008.

"I had no concerns at the time," said Horton.

Looking out from her home, Horton found she could see over a dozen wind turbines, part of the 44-turbine Port Alma Wind Project built by Kruger Energy Group of Montreal.

In the beginning, as the wind took hold of the turbine blades, there was excitement in the Horton home, but that excitement soon gave way to concern.

"My husband could not sleep at night," said Horton. "I couldn't hear anything, but he could feel it in his ears."

Horton said her husband described the noise like that annoying flutter you get on your ears when you drive down the highway with the window open just a crack.

"It never occurred to us it could be the turbines," said Horton, who soon found herself with unexplained headaches and fatigue. Even her young children became groggy, some nights half-waking from disturbed sleep and crying out, "Stop that noise!"

As the months went by, Horton became convinced the turbines were affecting her family. She and her husband discussed moving but decided they wanted to remain in Chatham-Kent where their families live. The municipality is planning to allow the construction of turbines over much of the landscape.



"We don't want to move," she said. "Where would we move to? Turbines are planned everywhere!"

By May 2009, Horton started an Internet blog called *My Next Door Neighbour is a Wind Turbine*. The blog is a diary of her family's experience living among the turbines.

"I am amazed as I research this issue to see how little is really known about the effects of wind turbines on humanity and wildlife," the homepage says.

A letter to the editor submitted to several local newspapers that same month reveals Horton's frustration, the last hint of her initial wonder and faith in the turbines fading.

"Have you visited the wind turbines out near Dealtown?" she wrote. "They are truly amazing, beautiful and futuristic. Green energy is the way of the future, but at what cost? My family and I live close to the existing wind turbines and are suffering because of it. Promised to be quiet and unobtrusive, the wind turbines are, in fact, the opposite. Sleep disturbances, headaches, ear ringing, nausea and fatigue are a handful of the symptoms we are experiencing."

Today the Horton family is still hopeful that solutions can be found. They cling to their home and have begun "renovating" it, trying to make it turbine-proof despite its relatively new construction.

Noise is one thing. Horton also fears there may be more affecting the family, possibly "electrical pollution", sometimes called stray voltage.

"I am fearful for my children," said Horton.

Posted on her blog are photos of the mysterious skin rashes plaguing her family.

Horton has never heard of Ernie Marshall and his wife Sharon, who gave up living in their home near Goderich after trying to co-exist with the wind turbines in the Kingsbridge I project operated by Alberta-based EPCOR.

Initially, Marshall welcomed the wind energy project, but soon found that the noise was not "whisper quiet" as promised by the wind developers. In addition, Marshall became convinced that the noise, coupled with electrical pollution, was at the root of the couple's health problems, including a mysterious skin rash experienced by his wife.

Horton said many people have contacted her to share similar stories, but she finds many of the "victims" are afraid to speak out, fearful of being labeled or even ridiculed.

"It's big money, big money for the city too," Horton said. "There is a dark side they don't want you (to be) aware of."

Rural life may never be the same. Wind is changing the landscape.

In Essex County, big shovels will soon cut into the earth, gouging holes that will each be filled with over 40 truckloads of cement, the base for the 165,000-kilogram steel towers that will suspend an 88,000-kilogram machine, fitted with three blades over 40 metres long that have a combined weight of 43,000 kilograms.

"Massive" best describes them.

Situated in the open lands of Lakeshore and Kingsville, over 90 large-scale wind turbines are planned by Brookfield Renewable Power Inc., 22 turbines in the Gosfield Wind Project and 72 turbines in the Comber Wind Project. They have the blessing of the respective municipalities. Of all the local wind energy projects, the Brookfield projects have received the least opposition.

With corporate offices in Toronto and Gatineau, Quebec, Brookfield is one of the largest independent producers of renewable energy in North and South America. With a proud 100-year history of hydroelectric generation, Brookfield's current portfolio includes more than 160 hydroelectric generating stations and one wind farm, comprising more than 4,000 megawatts of capacity.

"We hope to break ground before the end of the year," said Ian Kerr, project

manager for the Gosfield project, which has cleared nearly all of the hurdles needed to begin construction.

Kerr said the wind turbines would be similar to those found in the Port Alma wind project – about 80 metres to the hub, but the blades will be a few metres longer, about 49 metres in length.

"The response from the community has been positive," said Kerr, noting that Brookfield was not plagued by opposition from citizen's groups that battle wind energy projects in other areas of the county.

Kerr said the Prince Wind Energy Project outside of Sault Ste. Marie was Brookfield Renewable Power's first wind development, as well as the first commercial wind farm in Northern Ontario. When it began operation in November 2006, it also became Canada's largest wind farm, with 126 wind turbine generators and a combined installed capacity of 189 megawatts.

Although situated in a more remote area, with fewer residents to impact, Kerr said they have experienced no real problems with the Prince project.

"We were certainly not seeing any evidence it causes health problems," he said. "It has been in operation for three years, with no issues."

Kerr said Brookfield has not experienced strong opposition to their land-based turbines, unlike what is happening with a wind energy project proposed for Lake Erie.

"There has been some considerable opposition to offshore turbines," said Kerr.

Despite scaling back an original plan that called for over 100 wind turbines in Pigeon Bay, SouthPoint Wind has run into a storm of protest over a 15-turbine project.

Residents of Kingsville, Leamington and Union are protesting the proposed placement of five turbines directly off each community's shores and they've received support from their municipalities and the Essex Region Conservation Authority.

In two independent reviews, one by The Jones Consulting Group and the other by experts at ERCA, SouthPoint's environmental screening report was slammed. Both reviews deemed the report to be "lacking" and "inadequate." Both Kingsville and Leamington councils have called for a full independent environmental study.

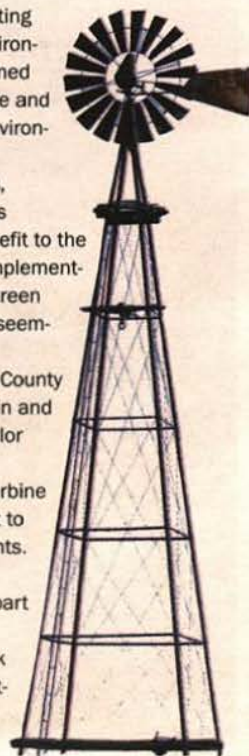
Seemingly reluctant to answer direct media questions, SouthPoint Wind wrote a letter to the editor of local papers expressing their belief that the project will be a "great benefit to the community and the environment." With the government implementing a new renewable energy approval process under the Green Energy Act, SouthPoint called the municipalities' actions "seemingly irrelevant."

Other land-based turbine projects proposed for Essex County have met with opposition and split the communities both in and out of the political arena, pitting councillor against councillor and neighbour against neighbour.

Construction has just begun on AIM PowerGen's 24-turbine Harrow Wind Project but Colette McLean, a resident about to be thrown into their midst, is already having sleepless nights.

Originally "impressed" by AIM's Port Burwell project, McLean was seriously considering leasing her land to be part of the Harrow project.

"It appeared that as the landowner I had very little risk and that I would be receiving easy money, more than what we could make from growing a crop," said McLean.



"However, once we had the meeting with our lawyer – one who specialized in railway, pipeline and electrical tower right-of-ways – we were alarmed as to the details he revealed to us," she said.

Now an active member of Wind Concerns Ontario, a coalition of 35 citizens' groups in 25 counties and districts across the province, McLean feels frustrated as the province commits so many resources to push for wind power.

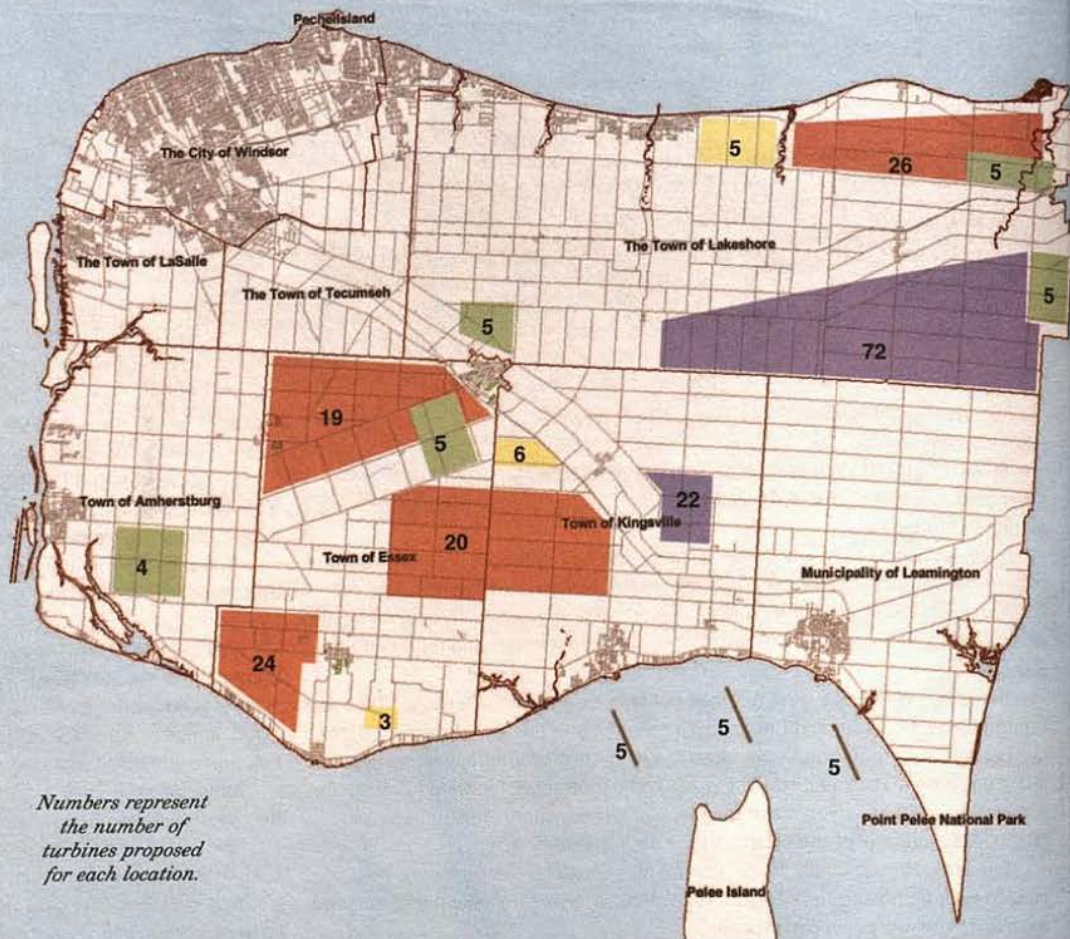
"Processes got put into place and I found myself struggling to get my county and municipal council to hear the negative aspects of wind," McLean said. "Every time I was met with indignation and I was labelled as a simple NIMBY (an acronym for "not in my backyard"), and anti-wind, pro-nuclear, or an angry person who could not accept a difference of opinion."

McLean believes much of it is about money, about everyone wanting "a piece of that big green pie."

"It's just plain bloody scary and beyond my understanding how people can see these behemoths as elegant structures that are providing a solution to a world crisis," McLean said.

Essex County awaits its own outcomes, on all the issues.

In the meantime, one thing is for sure: Wind will shape the new landscape.



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Get up, get out, even when it's chilly

When the temperatures are dropping and the wind is blowing, curling up in the family room with a good book or your favourite DVD can be tempting, and time should definitely be made to do just that.

Many of us, however, once planted comfy on the couch, find it less than enticing to get up again. Lethargy and inactivity can too easily become the order of the season.

Short days, long nights and frigid temperatures mark the winter months, but remember... Essex County is at the southernmost tip of the county. Winter here is comparatively mild and there is no reason to avoid the myriad of outdoor activities available to us.

Sledding:

Bundle the kids up with mitts and scarves and head to the closest hill to enjoy an afternoon of sledding. Sledding is a perfect outdoor activity for all ages and it's both fun and physical.

You may want to try something outside of the traditional toboggan. Snowboards, snow tubes and snow racers are just the beginning when it comes to alternative downhill sliders.

Many hills in the county are equipped with lighting so hitting the hills after dinner is an option.

Ice Skating:

Take your entire family to your favourite local arena or skating rink, for an afternoon on the ice.

Ensure little ones have proper safety gear, such as a helmet, elbow and knee-pads.

Bring a thermos of hot chocolate and some homemade cookies as a treat during breaks off the ice.

Walking:

When snow and frost lace the naked trees or dust the evergreens, there are no prettier places than our parks and trails.

This region has a fantastic network of walking trails in surroundings that can make you feel the wonder of winter.

If snow and ice make your summertime jog hazardous, lace up the boots, don the touque and gloves and go for a walk. This is a great way to spend time with a loved one.

A neighbourhood stroll can be an opportunity to connect with others who are brave enough to weather the outdoors. It is also a good time to take note of which neighbours may need help clearing ice and snow.

Getting outside together is a good way to connect with friends and family in a way that doesn't happen in front of the TV. Planning regular outdoor events for the whole family, or on your own, will combat the winter blues like no other remedy.

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Unsolved murders Fighting for justice

By Jennifer Cranston

It is a difficult time in anyone's life when a loved one dies. It is especially difficult when that death is unexpected and leaves unanswered questions in its wake. The devastation that murder leaves behind is only made worse when the killer lives free.

**Christine Woelk,
49, murdered May 18, 2004**

Christine Woelk, 49, was in a transition phase in her life, boldly moving forward and starting over. Her relationship with a live-in boyfriend had ended and she was in the process of rebuilding. She and one of her two adult daughters, Laura, had moved out of the home they shared with this man near the lake in Leamington and moved in with her brother John and his wife Evelyn.

She only lived with her brother and sister-in-law for two weeks. She had put an offer in on a house and was moving on with her life.

Christine's family describes her as a strong, caring and loving person who kept her problems to herself.

"When she was struggling, she didn't tell us," said John.

John and Evelyn cherish the time she spent in their home.

"We really got to know her a lot better when she lived with us," said Evelyn. "We had more laughs out on the deck."

"Those are the moments you hang onto," added John.

On May 18, 2004, Christine didn't come home from work. She hadn't called during the day and when they still hadn't heard from her by that evening, Evelyn and Laura called police to see if there might have been an accident and to report her missing. They waited all night but Christine never came home.

"She just didn't stay out," said Evelyn. "She wasn't a party person."

Christine finished her shift at Leamington District Memorial Hospital and went to visit a friend.

Later in the day she was seen in her van on Oak St., arguing with a man in the passenger seat.

That was the last time anyone saw her alive.

With a description of her van, police spent all night looking for her. On May 20 the van was found parked between two cottages on Point Pelee Dr. The vehicle was unlocked and the keys were in the ignition. Christine's purse, wallet, cell phone and a broken pair of prescription sunglasses were all left behind.

On May 25, one week after she disappeared, Christine Woelk's body was found at Black Willow Beach at Point Pelee National Park. It was evident that it had been in the water for a considerable amount of time. Her death was immediately treated as suspicious.

"This whole investigation was difficult right from the start," said Leamington Police Constable Kevin O'Neil. "There had been a week between the report and the body being found."

Police ruled out suicide and on Dec. 10 appealed to the public for help solving the homicide.

"Everything indicated that she was excited and preparing for the next stage of her life," O'Neil said.

There was a whole team of officers working on the case, both from Leamington Police Service and the OPP. Over 100 people were

interviewed.

Through this investigation police were able to identify a "person of interest."

"There are key pieces of evidence missing," said O'Neil.

Police are unable to lay any charges until more evidence is uncovered. In Canada a person can only be tried once for the same crime. This means that if police charge a person when the evidence is insufficient, the accused may be found "not guilty" and go free, never to be held accountable for their crime.

"From the start investigators believed that there are people out there who know what happened to Ms. Woelk and, for whatever reason, they are reluctant to come forward," O'Neil said. "The thing we have done from the start and to this day is appeal to the public."

O'Neil believes it is possible that over the last five years someone may have heard something. If that is the case police want to know about it.

It doesn't matter if it's gossip or rumour. It doesn't matter if it seems insignificant. Anyone who knows anything is asked to call Leamington Police or report information anonymously through Crime Stoppers.

"Since May of 2004 this has been an ongoing investigation. We still have an officer assigned to this case and still receive information from time to time," O'Neil said. "We are confident that an arrest will be made."

There is a \$50,000 reward available to anyone who can help solve this murder.

A conviction in her murder won't bring Christine back to her family and friends, but it would bring it to a close.

"My parents are in their 80s," said John. "They would like closure before they die."

Five years later Christine's daughters, Laura and Melissa, siblings and parents are coming to terms with her loss. Holidays and family get-togethers are not the same and special moments aren't quite what they would have been.

Laura will be getting married next year, without her mother.

"Now you accept it," said John. "You go on but you never forget. You think about her all the time."



Nancy Galbraith-Quick, 39, murdered Feb. 23, 2006

On the morning of Feb. 23, 2006 Nancy Galbraith-Quick was murdered in front of St. William's School in Emeryville. Her killer is still free.

A dark haired man about 5'11" stole a gold Chrysler mini-van from a nearby neighbourhood, parked near the school where Nancy worked and waited for her.

According to police, the driver of the van accelerated and intentionally struck Galbraith-Quick as she crossed Emery Dr. She was thrown into a nearby tree and later died in hospital. The driver abandoned the van about a kilometre from the scene and fled on foot.

Nancy's two children now live with their father, Scott Quick. Evan was 11 and Julia was 8 when their mother died. "She was the life of the party," said Sandy McCrone, Galbraith-Quick's aunt and godmother. "A very happy-go-lucky person." What the family is really looking for is closure.

"If anyone has any information, please call Crime Stoppers," said cousin Wendy McCrone. Sr. Const. Dave Ferris of Windsor and Essex County Crime Stoppers says that this is not a "cold case."

Police are still working on bringing the killer to justice. Some evidence is still undergoing testing and Ferris says they still need witnesses and information.

There were several children who witnessed the incident as they were waiting to start the school day. Crown attorneys and prosecutors are often reluctant to put children on the witness stand, explained Ferris. It is difficult for children to understand and testify can be very traumatic for them.

Galbraith-Quick's family has organized several fundraisers and has been able to add \$3,000 to the Crime Stoppers reward.



Russell Floyd "Rocky" Cook, 29, murdered Dec. 22 or 23, 1977

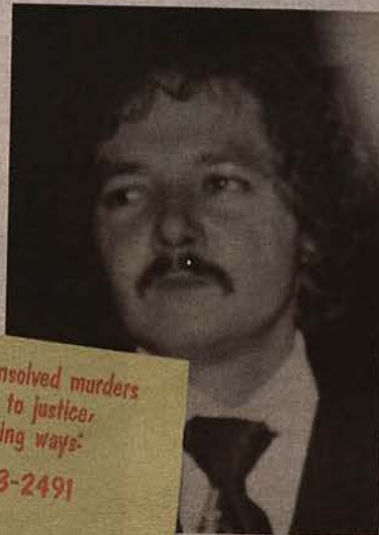
Russell Floyd "Rocky" Cook lived in the Woodslee area and attended Essex District High School. After high school he worked as an ambulance attendant, where he earned the nickname "Baby Man" because of the high number of babies he delivered on the job.

On Dec. 23, 1977 a motorist traveling on County Rd. 25, just south of County Rd. 46 discovered Cook's body in a ditch. He had been shot in the chest.

Cook left behind a seven-year-old daughter and his parents. The OPP announced in Feb. 2007 that new technology has given them reason to reopen the over-30-year-old case.

At that time his father, Russell Cook, spoke to reporters. "My wife and I would like to thank the police...who have been working...to solve the murder of my son," he said. "I thank you for doing the work for us."

Cook's parents are now in their 80s. The OPP has issued a \$50,000 reward for any new information about this case.



If you know anything about these unsolved murders and want to help bring a killer to justice, contact authorities in the following ways:

Essex County OPP at 519-723-2491
or 1-888-310-1122

Leamington Police Service at 519-326-3214

Crime Stoppers at 519-258-TIPS < 8477 >
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Note: Crime Stoppers allows people to give information anonymously. If the information leads to an arrest, a reward is offered through identification number and drop-off location.

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Adventure

First Battalion Royal Canadian Regiment is tattooed in flowing script on Jamieson Hatt's right forearm. It's something that sets him apart from his co-workers at the fitness club in Kingsville where he works as the assistant manager. It's a mark he wears with pride – a daily reminder that self-discipline and perseverance are the hallmarks of success.

This is his story.

By Laurie Brett

Private Hatt, Rifleman

Like many rural residents of Essex County, Jamieson Hatt has trouble explaining where he's from. Growing up on the 11th Concession of Mersea Township, Hatt had a Staples address and a Wheatley phone number, but he attended elementary school in Blytheswood and high school in Leamington. At 30 years of age, he now lives in Kingsville.

"I just started telling people that I'm from Windsor," he says. It was simply easier to name a larger reference point than try to explain the vagaries of Essex County geography.

After an unremarkable stint at Leamington District Secondary School – "I just wanted to goof around and play hockey," he says – Hatt enlisted at the recruiting centre in Windsor in early 1998. He was 18 years old and looking for adventure. From start to finish that's what he would find.

Military aptitude testing placed him in the infantry. "I really wanted infantry anyway. It was the hardest and the most dangerous," he says.

New recruits generally report to the Canadian Forces' training facility at St-Jean-sur-Richelieu, Quebec. But, in the spring of 1998, parts of that province were still recovering from the massive damage to trees and electrical wiring brought about by the "Great Ice Storm" that struck parts of eastern Ontario, Quebec and the Maritimes in January. Hatt was ordered to attend eight weeks of basic training in Meaford, Ontario, instead of St-Jean, followed by another 16 weeks of infantry training.

"I remember the description for infantry is to close with and destroy the enemy by day or night, regardless of season, weather or terrain," he says. "Infantry sounded pretty cool at the time."



That fall, Hatt took his place in Petawawa as a soldier of the First Battalion, Royal Canadian Regiment, one of Canada's oldest military units.

Conflict in Kosovo

While Jamieson Hatt was learning to shoot mortars and tough it out as a Canadian soldier in Petawawa, world events were conspiring to draw him and his battalion halfway around the world.

Kosovo is a region in southern Serbia inhabited by a majority of ethnic Albanians. Until 1989, it enjoyed a high degree of autonomy within the former Yugoslavia, despite nationalist unrest between ethnic Albanians and Serbs. When Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic started taking steps to reduce the political and cultural autonomy of the Kosovar Albanians, many were thrown into poverty and unemployment. A policy of peaceful resistance to Serbian repression managed to keep Kosovo out of the wars in Croatia and Bosnia in the early 1990s. But, as frustration grew, people started to organize and, in 1997, the Kosovo Liberation Army started to take matters into its own hands. During 1998, open conflict between Serbian and Kosovar Albanian forces resulted in over 1,500 deaths and forced about 400,000 people from their homes.

As the conflict intensified, the international community, led by NATO, became concerned about the humanitarian consequences. They managed to broker a ceasefire in October 1998 that lasted only a few weeks. Despite diplomatic efforts, by March 1999 it was clear that Milosevic would not comply with the terms of the October agreement. On March 23, NATO air strikes began and continued until June 12 when Milosevic surrendered.

Canadian soldiers of the Princess Patricia's Canadian Light Infantry, headquartered at CFB Edmonton, were deployed to Kosovo as part of NATO's security presence and peacekeeping mission. At the end of that tour, PPCLI was replaced by IRRCR – the First Battalion of the Royal Canadian Regiment. Jamieson Hatt was among the soldiers deployed to Kosovo in the fall of 1999.

Ten years after the air strikes in Kosovo and eight years after 9/11, military tours of duty have become disturbingly real for most Canadian soldiers serving in Afghanistan. But, in 1999, before the "War on Terror" turned Western notions of security inside out, an infantryman could have a fairly safe tour. Hatt worked 12-hour shifts that consisted mostly of vehicle patrols and providing basic security services for the war-torn region. While it might have been relatively safe for the NATO soldiers, Hatt and members of his mortar platoon witnessed the devastation of war – bridges rendered



On the High Seas

impassable, buildings blown apart, and a lack of basic infrastructure including running water. They also experienced the frigid cold of a Balkan winter from the "comfort" of their dome-like weatherhaven.

Sailing the High Seas

Hatt's tour in Kosovo ended three months early, giving him the opportunity to return home with his battalion. Now 20 years old and single, Hatt decided to "stand rear party" to help close down the camp. When that was done, he volunteered to work security at a support base in Macedonia. Finally, he was accepted to the "boat party" as one of three soldiers who would accompany \$223 million worth of Canadian military equipment on the voyage back to Canada. As a result, he was deployed to Greece.

"I actually did so much more with that tour," he says. "I could've come home three months before all this stuff, but I actually stayed three or four months more." Good thing that he did; the adventure was just about to begin.

The GTS Katie, a Soviet-era freighter owned by Third Ocean Marine Navigation Co. of Annapolis, Maryland, but registered in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, had been chartered by Andromeda Navigation Co. of Montreal. Andromeda was a sub-contractor hired by Montreal-based SDV Logistics Canada Ltd. to transport 580 vehicles, 390 containers of munitions and equipment, and three Canadian soldiers for the Department of National Defence. DND had hired SDV Logistics, at a cost of \$1.35 million, to do the job.

On June 27, 2000, GTS Katie left Thessaloniki, Greece, on what was supposed to be a 12-day voyage ending at Bécancour, Quebec. Pte. Hatt, Master Cpl. Dan Daly of CFB Petawawa, and Cpl. Eric Lacroix of CFB Valcartier were entrusted with care of the cargo.

Fine weather and good relations with the Ukrainian and Croatian crew made for an enjoyable voyage, says Hatt. When he wasn't checking the cargo to ensure it was still properly lashed down, Hatt spent his days working through the ship's collection of videos, including *Titanic*, and socializing with his fellow soldiers and three or four English-speaking crewmen. An infestation of cockroaches aboard the ship didn't bother him a bit.



▲ Canadian Forces armoured vehicles are placed in formation alongside the GTS Katie

"It was really relaxing out there..."

It was probably one of the best times of my life," says Hatt.

On July 18, twenty-one days into the trip, the ship's owner ordered the Katie to linger in international waters while a monetary dispute between Third Ocean Marine and Andromeda Navigation was resolved. A resolution never came and the freighter drifted on the Atlantic Ocean for another 16 days.

Although some media reports referred to the soldiers as "hostages" or "pawns" in the dispute, Hatt says he never felt like a captive.

"At a certain point, when we were out on the Atlantic just drifting, I just thought a lot about life and I relaxed."

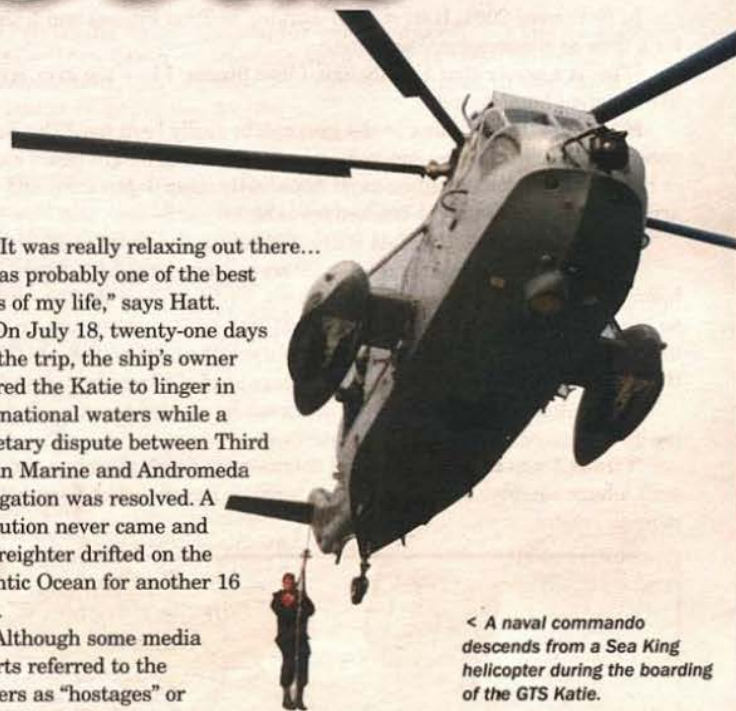
Meanwhile, Canadian government officials worked diligently to repatriate the military equipment, the loss of which would significantly reduce the operational capabilities of the Canadian Forces. According to public information issued by National Defence and available on their website, when mediation efforts failed, diplomatic channels were used to secure permission from the Government of St. Vincent and the Grenadines to board the Katie without objection.

Operation Megaphone went into action.

On July 30, the naval destroyer HMCS Athabaskan received orders to shadow the Katie, anchored about 170 kilometres off the eastern shores of Newfoundland. The destroyer was joined a day later by the frigate HMCS Montréal.

On Aug. 3, Hatt and his two fellow Canadian soldiers donned their combat fatigues in anticipation of what was to come. By contrast, the Ukrainian captain was reportedly wearing his bedroom slippers and casual clothing when 14 heavily armed navy commandos from the Athabaskan rappelled down from a Sea King helicopter and boarded the Katie without incident.

In the aftermath of the aerial assault, the freighter was escorted to its destination at Bécancour, stopping near Rimouski, Quebec on August 5 when the Katie reportedly ran out of fuel. On August 8, tugboats hauled the Katie into port.



◀ A naval commando descends from a Sea King helicopter during the boarding of the GTS Katie.

When they arrived in Bécancour, the Canadian soldiers were met by a rabble of journalists with a multitude of questions. Jamieson Hatt had no idea that his adventure on the GTS Katie had made national and international headlines. One reporter from the Ottawa Citizen, Zev Singer, followed the progress of the Katie closely, filing regular stories that were picked up and published by other Southam newspapers including the Windsor Star. Singer went so far as to persuade two Newfoundland fishermen to ferry him and a photographer out to the Katie to observe and report on the boarding. But for Singer's reports, the incident would have been just a small blip on the nightly newscast.

Shortly after his return to Petawawa, Hatt took a five-week vacation and then left the military to pursue other interests.

"The military is probably the best thing that's ever happened to me, but at the same time, did I want to do 20 years of that? I guess I figured I'd take a chance and see what else is out there."

In November 2001, Hatt started working at Total Fitness and trained for a time as a professional triathlete.

"This is a career that I really like. I love fitness. I love the gym, it's like a second home to me."

He admits that training at the gym can be really hard too. "The difference is after you train you can go home and shower, get eight hours sleep, or have a nice warm meal," he says. Apparently sleep deprivation and army rations are all they're cracked up to be.

Almost ten years later, Hatt is nostalgic about the voyage.

"When we got boarded and the military presence was back, I was bummed out. I was! I really got to be really good friends with these guys on the ship. It was a lot of work in Kosovo with military structure, and I totally got away from that. It was beautiful weather, I'm on the middle of the Atlantic... it was really peaceful... It was kind of like my vacation."

Having time to think about life and what he wanted to accomplish in his lifetime gave Hatt a new perspective.

"I think I was a good soldier, but there's more to life than just that. It's such a huge sacrifice to do that, which is pretty amazing, but I wanted more freedom."

A few months after the Katie docked in Bécancour, the Canadian Forces had reclaimed their cargo and the Katie was sold to a Liberian shipping company for US \$2 million.

The Department of National Defence paid almost \$1 million in an out-of-court settlement with the company it contracted with to move the military cargo from Kosovo to Canada.

The crewmembers of the Katie, including the ship's doctor, were owed weeks of wages when the ship docked. Customs and immigration officials processed them for return to their home countries.

Meanwhile, at Total Fitness, Hatt trains for his next event while many of those sweating around him remain unaware of the story of the soldier who was stranded on the high seas.



▲ Jamieson Hatt poses with local Kosovar children who, he says, would flock to Canadian soldiers handing out informational pamphlets.

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Top of the Food Chain

By Jennifer Cranston



< Coopers Hawk

^ At the Festival of Hawks at Holiday Beach on Sept. 19 five year old Michael Laliberte adopted this Sharp-Shinned Hawk he received a certificate, a picture of himself with the bird and the opportunity to release it.

There's a running joke at Holiday Beach that there are two kinds of birds: hawks (also known as raptors) and hawk food (the smaller birds that hawks prey upon). The experts and volunteers at the Holiday Beach Migration Observatory catch, band and record statistics for both kinds.

Holiday Beach and Point Pelee are among the best places in Canada to see migrating birds, especially raptors. Migrating birds tend to avoid crossing large bodies of water, so they gather along the shores of Lake Erie and move west to cross the Great Lakes at narrower bodies of water like the Detroit River.

Banding birds helps to track migration patterns and these migration patterns help researchers and governments protect these routes and the species that use them.

Each autumn, in restricted areas at Holiday Beach, fine nets are strung to gently catch raptors and their prey. These birds are identified, checked for health and age, and banded. Then they are released to continue their journey south.

Bob Hall-Brooks is a bird bander who sees a greater purpose in what he does.

"Basically in our case we're trying to learn more about the birds. They are a good indicator of our environment," he said. "When wild fluctuations in populations are reported it may be cause for further study."

Hall-Brooks explains that the entire Lake Erie shoreline is a globally significant bird area on the main migration route. Many of these birds travel as far north as The Arctic and as far south as

"What we've done is given this bird an identity."

— Bob Hall-Brooks
regarding the black throated warbler

South America so they can provide information that is relevant to the environmental health of two continents.

Justin Bosler, with the help of volunteers, counts thousands of hawks as they fly over the conservation area. He explained that hawk counting started in the 1970s when researchers discovered that raptor populations were rapidly declining. The common use of a pesticide called DDT (dichlorodiphenyl-trichloroethane) was thinning the shells

Justin Bosler began birding as a child with his father. He is now fortunate enough to have a job doing what he loves. He watches, counts and records migrating birds over Holiday Beach. The birds he counts can range in number from a lone owl to tens of thousands of hawks in one flock. Because the birds fly at very high altitudes he uses a high powered telescopic lens to identify and count birds flying over head. >

of raptor eggs, jeopardizing the viability of some eggs. DDT is toxic to humans and animals and was banned in the early 1970s.

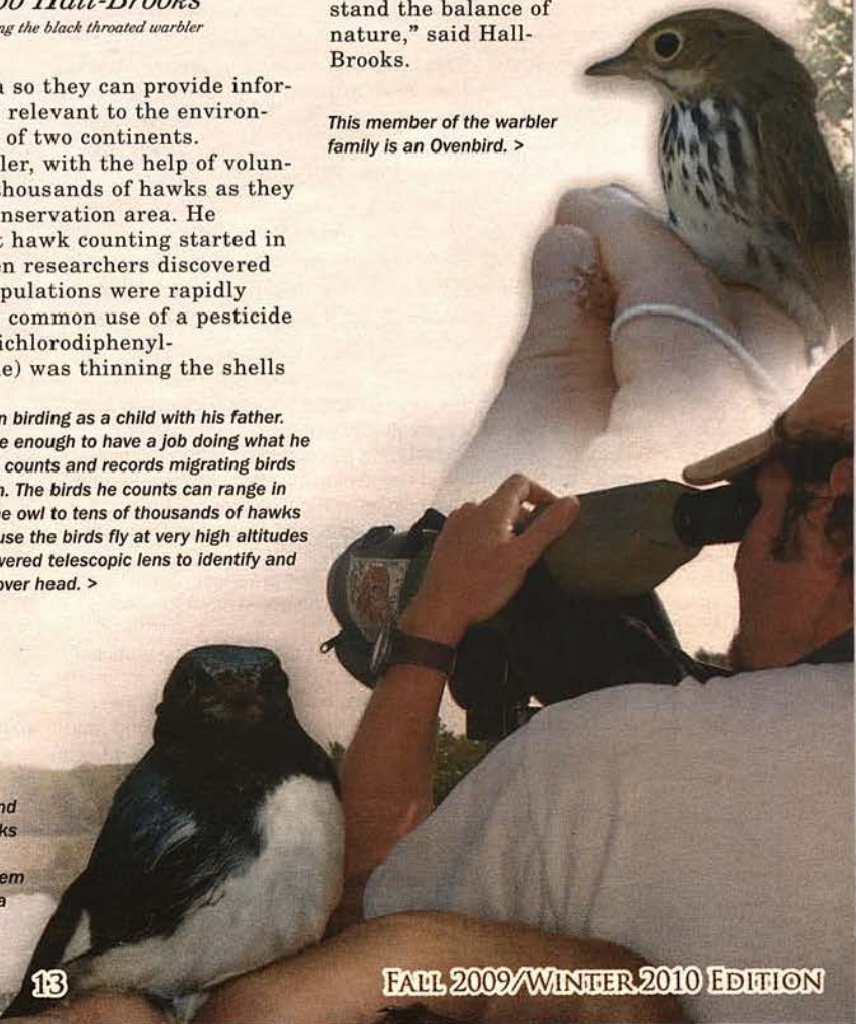
Because raptors are at the top of the food chain, they are great indicators of pollutants in the environment and the far-reaching effects. Toxins in the environment tend to become concentrated as they move up the food chain. If hawks get into trouble it signifies trouble, in all the species they prey on and our environment as a whole.

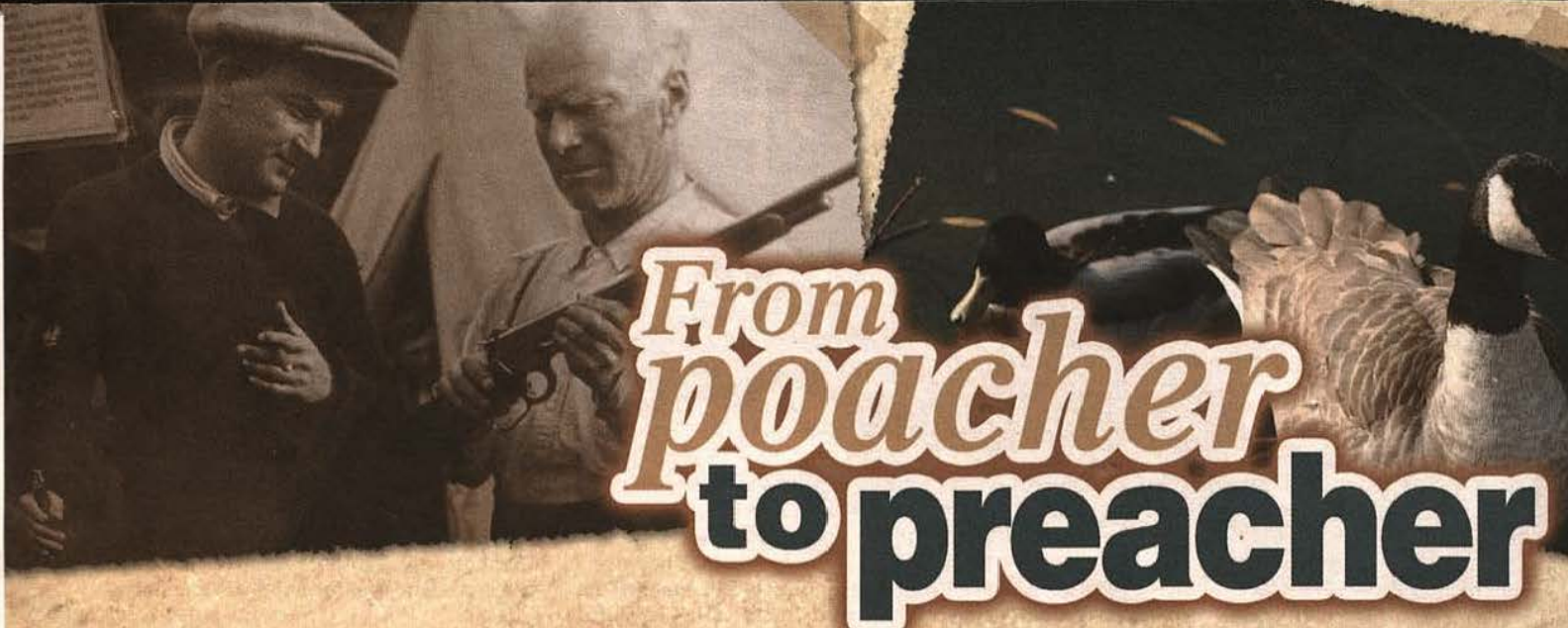
Holiday Beach researchers also track monarch butterflies, dragon flies and other flying insects. By collecting information from every level of the food web they gain a very broad perspective.

"You really start to understand the balance of nature," said Hall-Brooks.

This member of the warbler family is an Ovenbird. >

This black throated warbler was caught processed, banded and released at a restricted area at Holiday Beach. Bob Hall-Brooks gently measures the birds with a ruler, uses a straw to blow feathers aside to see body fat and weighs them by placing them in a plastic tube or toilet paper tube and placing the tube on a scale. >





From poacher to preacher

WILD GOOSE JACK: The man who changed the world

By Jennifer Cranston

In the early 1900s, three of the best-known men in North America, innovators and champions in their own right, lived and worked in this area and were friends to each other. Henry Ford changed the way we build automobiles and our perception of factories and manufacturing. Ty Cobb of the Detroit Tigers is, to this day, considered to be one of the greatest baseball players of all time, setting 90 Major League Baseball records during his career. Jack Miner was a naturalist, or conservationist as they're called today, whose revolutionary practices and ideas form the foundation of much of today's wildlife conservation efforts. Miner is called "the father of conservation," so dubbed by the Minneapolis Journal in 1906.

Today, the conservation movement is in full swing in North America. Planting trees, preserving habitat and protecting wildlife are parts of our everyday lives. This phenomenon is due in large part to conservation pioneer, Kingsville's own Wild Goose Jack.

Jack Miner was born in Dover Center, Ohio on April 10, 1865. A plaque in front of a house in Dover Center marks it as Miner's birthplace.

As a young boy, Miner was considered to be "not suited for school." Times being what they were, his mother allowed him to drop out after only three months of formal education. He was much more comfortable in the outdoors and spent much of his time learning in the natural world. On his own, he studied the habits and patterns of wildlife.

When Miner was 13 years old, his family immigrated to Gosfield South Township to work in a brick and tile yard just outside Kingsville. It was owned by the Brodwell family, relatives of Miner's mother.

"A lot of people who came to Jack Miner's thought that because he attracted geese there would be a marsh," explained his grandson, Kirk Miner.

The irony is that the area was once marshland but the tile created by the brickyard was used to drain the area long before Miner created his bird sanctuary.

As a young man in the 1880s, Miner supplemented his income from the family brickyard with commercial hunting and trapping. He hunted and sold game birds.

Within six years Miner experienced three personal tragedies that, his grandson says, brought Miner to a turning point in his life. At the age of three, his daughter Pearl died. Not long after, his 30-year-old brother, Ted, was shot and killed in a hunting accident. Then, in 1904, Miner's 13-year-old son, Carl, died of appendicitis.

This is when the man who was once renowned for being one of the best game bird hunters in the region took his first step to becoming famous worldwide for sheltering, protecting and studying these birds. It has been said that he "went from poacher to preacher."

As a hunter, Miner was aware of the diminishing waterfowl population. He watched their habitat disappear as forests were cleared for farmland and he became acutely aware that game birds could be wiped out completely if something wasn't done.

In February 1904, Miner bought seven Canada geese with clipped wings and released them on his property.

Jack's son, Manly, later recounted the story for Reader's Digest Magazine:

While I watched with the bursting excitement of a seven-year-old, Father carefully freed the wing-clipped geese in a muddy pond beside our farmhouse... Then he rose, wiry-strong and straight as a rifle barrel, his blue eyes alive with the new idea. "Now we'll see if others will join them," he said. "I've been their enemy. I wonder if they'll have me for a friend." At first it was a terrible failure. No birds came that year or any of the next three years.

In 1908, four years after the experiment began, a group of 11 geese joined the original seven. The next year, 32 geese took sanctuary on Miner's land. In 1910, about 400 birds, including geese and ducks, found refuge at Jack Miner's Bird Sanctuary.

Miner banded his first duck in 1909. The aluminum band read "Box 48, Kingsville, Ont." A month later, in 1910, the first banding record was completed when a hunter from Anderson, South Carolina returned the band.

From this banding program, and the return of thousands of bands, Miner was able, for the first time in history, to create maps that highlighted the migration patterns of geese and ducks throughout North America. Miner's banding records were instrumental in passing the Migratory Bird Treaty Act of 1918, which facilitated joint efforts by Canadian and U.S. governments to protect wildlife.

In later years these bands quoted Bible verses, a different verse for each year. Today these bands are collectors' items. They are the only bands permitted to carry scripture, because Miner's program is older than the law forbidding it.

Soon there were thousands of Canada Geese and ducks stopping at Jack Miner's Bird Sanctuary.

"This is one of the primary stopping areas for minor migratory species," said Kirk, who now runs the sanctuary.

"Granddad wanted three things," remembers Kirk. "No admission, nothing to be sold on the property and to be closed on Sundays."

Jack came from a poor family of 10 children. He remembered what it was like when the circus came to Cleveland. He and his brother could never go because they didn't have the 25-cent admission.

"Let there be a place on Earth where no money changes hands," Jack said upon opening his sanctuary.

This is the philosophy that forbade donations on sanctuary grounds. The Jack Miner Migratory Bird Foundation, Inc. was established in the U.S. in 1931 and in Canada in 1936. Donations are still not accepted on the property, but they can be mailed in.

By 1910, feeding so many birds and running the sanctuary had become so expensive that something had to be done to raise funds. That year, Miner began to travel and do speaking engagements to raise money for his birds. For 30 years he lectured, sometimes five times a day, from Alaska to New York and

everywhere in between, promoting wildlife conservation.

These talks are where many "Minerisms" came from. "Get all the education you can; then add the learning," and "Today is the tomorrow you worried about yesterday," are examples of his simple and often humorous wisdom.

Miner's somewhat unrefined but emotional, funny and inspiring lectures endeared him to audiences and he was very successful in converting people to the conservationist way of thinking.

Soon prominent people of the day began to support Miner's efforts. Henry Ford donated fencing and helped to create a film that Jack could use during his lectures. The first Ford tractor to be used in Canada was donated to Jack Miner.

Richard B. Mellon, head of the Aluminum Company of America, now called Alcoa, donated all the aluminum needed for the bird bands. The company created a special alloy that the sanctuary still receives today.

Miner could not read or write until he was in his thirties, but that didn't stop him from writing three books. *Jack Miner and the Birds* and *Jack Miner on Current Topics* are still available at the bird sanctuary in Kingsville. His autobiography, *Wild Goose Jack*, published 25 years after his death, is also available.

In 1929, Miner was awarded the Outdoor Life Gold Medal "for the greatest achievement in wildlife conservation on the continent." It was the first time a Canadian was so honoured.

In 1943, Miner received the Order of the British Empire, bestowed by King George VI "for the greatest achievement in conservation in the British Empire."

There were several other awards and honours bestowed upon Jack Miner but the most enduring of these honours did not come until after his death.

Jack Miner died in 1944 and was buried at the sanctuary beside his wife. Their sarcophagus is marked with the carving of seven geese in a V. It is the most common number and formation for Canada geese. The seven geese represent the two buried there and their five children.

The National Wildlife Week Act passed with a unanimous vote in the House of Commons in 1947. It acknowledges the week of Miner's birthday, April 10, as National Wildlife Week. Schools, organizations and the media observe this week annually.

Named "one of the 15 great personages of the world" by the Book of Knowledge, and ranked by several American newspapers as the fifth best-known man on the continent in 1944, after Ford, Edison, Lindbergh and Rickenbacker, Miner made an important contribution during his lifetime and continues to impact our lives today.

A century ago, Jack Miner changed migration patterns in North America by deliberately attracting birds to his property. Now those patterns are changing again. The

introduction of Giant Canada Geese by Canadian and U.S. governments in the 1980s has supplemented the hunting industry but caused many changes. These oversized geese are the ones we see in parks and on golf courses year-round. They don't migrate and are great living decoys for the migrating variety. Many migrating geese now stop where they find these larger cousins. The smaller birds are also beginning to crossbreed with the giants.

Environmental changes have altered the peak season at the sanctuary from late October and early November to late November and early December. Just after dawn and before dusk are still the best times of day to see these great birds en masse.

While Kirk Miner continues the work of his grandfather, fewer birds visit the sanctuary than before and the operation is gradually taking on a new role.

"It's going to take on a more historical perspective," said Kirk.

The town of Kingsville bears his mark and will continue to do so for generations.

The first house Miner built and lived in with his wife has been moved to Heritage Village on the Arner Town Line and is often open for visitors to tour. A statue of Miner stands in front of the former Kingsville Town Hall (currently the OPP station) on Division Rd. S.

For 40 years Kingsville has ushered in autumn with the Migration Festival. It is a popular community event that celebrates the legacy of the town's most famous son.

Although Miner had no formal education, his name and his legacy have marked area educational facilities.

In 1964 Gosfield South Area Public School, which stands within walking distance of the sanctuary on Division Rd. and Concession 3, was re-named Jack Miner Public School. Students from that school still come every year to the sanctuary to help band birds.

In 1994 Migration Hall was built as an addition to Kingsville District High School and is used by both the school and the community. It is the prime venue for many cultural and educational events.

Jack Miner spent much of his life educating the public on the value of conservation. One hundred years after it began, his bird sanctuary still carries on his work. His banding program is still tracking the migration patterns of geese and ducks. And he is still teaching, through the story of his life, the evolution of his sanctuary and his enduring place in history.

Today, one of the main lessons to be learned from Jack Miner is the enormous impact that can be made by one inspired man. Jack Miner quite literally changed the world.



Photos
Facing page, top left:
Baseball legend Ty Cobb and Jack Miner
were good friends. The Cobb and Miner
families have maintained a relationship
to this day.

Above: Jack Miner's youngest son Jasper
feeds birds at the age of four. This picture
was taken in 1914 and can be seen at the
Jack Miner Museum located at the
sanctuary in Kingsville.

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SOUTH COAST

Writers

Words, words, words

South Coast Writers embark on a creative journey

By Laurie Brett

The sign outside says it's closed for renovations, but the lights inside the Leamington Arts Centre are glowing through the windows and people are starting to trickle in for the first fall meeting of the South Coast Writers.

The group's defacto leader, Brian Sweet, is placing oatmeal-chocolate chip cookies on paper plates and Bits & Bites in dishes. Pitchers of water are already centred on each rectangular table alongside inverted paper cups.

Casual talk reveals that the guest speaker is unable to attend but Brian has come up with an appropriate substitute – a video on the old barns of Essex County. The writers are planning to team up with some local photographers to produce a book on local barns. Brian says we'll view the documentary later that evening.

There is no obvious starting point for the meeting. Casual pre-meeting chatter seamlessly merges into a more structured format with Brian at the helm. Announcements come first.

"Margaret just got one or both of her books transferred into an e-file book," he reports.

He is referring to Margaret McMaster, author of *Carried Away on Licorice Days* and *Babysitter Out of Control!* The Kingsville-based McMaster, a branch assistant at Essex Public Library, has had some success working with Chapters to convert her books, which are already listed with the bookstore, into e-books. She's

also got insider knowledge on how to get your books into the local library system.

The topics of books and libraries naturally go hand-in-hand.

"I'm also trying to get some people from the Essex County Library to come in," Brian says. "Now, if you go to their website or to their library, you can download audio books and e-books, and I was going to get them to come in and talk about that and explain to us how we can convert to an e-book and how we can get them into the library and what they can do for us."

The conversation turns to partnering with the Essex County Library system to help local writers promote themselves.

Local historian Chris Carter says that he's had some success getting the local library system to spread the word about his book, *Tour Olinda: Essex County's Only Ghost Town*. He's done a couple of speaking engagements and he's got a third one scheduled. Having a contact in the library system has ensured that his book is on some local library shelves and that he's able to continue with his book promotion.

News of local writers promoting their work comes fast and furious.

Joe Byrne, author of *Senses of Autumn*, a reality-based work of fiction about the local tomato industry, and *Of Great Character*, his newest book about the legendary pea harvest, will be speaking at Ray's Ribhouse in Leamington.

Children's writer Arnie McCallum will launch his new book, *Eanie Meanie Hate Zucchini*, at the

LaSalle Public Library in mid-October. It's believed to be the first book launch ever held at a branch of the Essex County Library.

Historian David Richard Beasley will be the guest of the Harrow Early Immigrant Research Society at the end of October. Beasley's new book, *From Bloody Beginnings: Richard Beasley's Upper Canada*, documents the life of his great-great-great-grandfather, a fur trader, soldier, politician, farmer and businessman in Upper Canada. His family was the last family to own Windsor's Baby House.

When mention is made of BookFest Windsor 2009, the writers bandy about the names of local writers who appear on the schedule.

"It's from November 4 to November 7 and it's held at the Art Gallery," Brian explains.

"They bring in big name authors, but more importantly..."

Brian's voice starts to contain a hint of exaggerated boastfulness.

"On the Wednesday night, to kick it off, they're going to have a session on self-publishing and local publishing efforts."

It turns out that Brian will be part of that panel along with Margaret McMaster and Melissa McCormick, author of *The Queen's Daughter*. Arnie McCallum and Kingsville's Nancy Belgie, author of four children's books including *The Scream of the Hawk* and *Soames on the Range*, are also mentioned in conjunction with other sessions.

Chris Carter suggests that people visit the BookFest website to view the schedule and "just cherry pick the ones you're interested in."

"Well, but Wednesday night should be a priority," Brian jokes. "We should rent a bus."

"David Adams Richards is the big highlight I think, isn't he?" I offer tentatively.

"No!" Brian retorts half-indignantly.

"After you Brian," I concede.

Everyone laughs.

Despite the levity, the group is serious about writing and even more serious about getting published, but the atmosphere is one of relaxed collaboration where problems meet creative solutions and advice is offered with no strings attached.

As the writers recount their accomplishments over the summer, it soon becomes

clear that they're all on their own creative journey.

Connie Latam, a Doctor of Natural Medicine and author of *Everything is Food!*, has been working on her grief recovery practice and has organized a number of workshops and retreats. She's saving up to print a workbook as a companion to *Everything is Food!*

Chris Carter launched *Souvenirs of the Past*, a reprint of William Lewis Bâby's collection of stories about pioneer life in Essex County, originally published as a second edition in 1896. He possesses a copy of the original, which he has brought with him. It's in excellent condition.

"There's no more than a dozen in all of Ontario. It's very, very rare."

Chris has written an introduction and produced an index to the book. He points out that Bâby was an investor in the town of Olinda, now devoid of commercial activity but once the industrial heartland of the area. His book, *Tour Olinda: Essex County's Only Ghost Town*, recounts the rise and fall of that community.

Jim Oates is getting ready to send his book to a publisher in Belleville, Ont. *Wilma - A Lady of Courage and Dignity* is a collection of stories about his wife who passed away in 2002. Writing about her life started as a personal project, a way to deal with his overwhelming grief. But early readers of the book suggested it could have wider appeal. He's now working with a Christian book publisher.

Barbara Kipp says she's written a children's picture book.

"That was the easy part," she says. "Then I tried to find an illustrator that I could afford. It was quite cost-prohibitive."

Cost was not her only problem. She had a clear idea of what the illustrations should look like but a sample illustration produced by an artist failed to meet her expectations. So she did what creative people do: she started sketching and ultimately spent the summer illustrating her own book. The manuscript was sent to a self-publishing company a few weeks ago and she's now waiting for a draft to come back. She's already started on a sequel and she's also writing a murder mystery set around Essex.

Jim Yaworsky, a Windsor lawyer and avid War of 1812 re-enactor, says he's been researching the Canada Southern Railway and is now "trading emails with the authorities". There's a plot for a novel brewing, he says.

Jane Buttery, author of *If I Could Go to the Harrow Fair* and *Mei Ling Discovers Jack Miner*, spent the summer promoting her children's books. She says she was "pleasantly surprised" at her success at the Harrow Fair. Now she's working on a handbook on writing your life story and she's planning to hold a workshop to teach people how to get started.

Ana Arévalo is a scientist, a cellular biologist, who has written a book about faith. *Visions and Experiences of Faith in Teotihuacan* is an autobiographical work that explores the relationship between science and religion using an archeological site 50 kilometres southeast of Mexico City as its inspiration. Ana spent a week in Mexico this summer taking photographs for her book and she's now struggling with the translation from Spanish to English.

"I don't want to lose the essence of what I'm trying to express," she says.

Several writers have advice on how she might find help for this arduous task.

Storytelling is a pervasive theme for Judith Enns of Leamington, who makes scarves.

Each scarf comes with a story, "a thread", she says.

Judith has taken to traveling with a camera and starts by telling a story that explains why.

"I was coming home from Kingsville and there was a storm and I was following the storm and I could see the sun and I was thinking, 'There's got to be a rainbow somewhere.' Does that sound like a story?"

Everyone laughs, recognizing the classic writer's theme.

"As I got to the marina, I thought 'I'm pulling in here.' That rainbow arced right down into the water and it splashed up. And I didn't have a camera," Judith explained.

She's not sure what her next project will be but she senses it will involve words and photographs.

Judith's story provides a nice segue into the next topic of discussion - partnering with Shooters Photography Club on a barn project. Gavin Barnett from the Kingsville-based club has attended this meeting to talk about pairing photos with stories, poetry and histories.

"I've had a great summer," he says, "and a number of serendipitous surprises have happened."

Hooking up with Chris Carter of the South Coast Writers is one of those serendipitous things. Chris attended a spring meeting of the photography club at which he pitched the idea of working together - photographers and writers. Two years earlier Gavin had taken a series of photos of old barns and only now is he drawn to resume the work.

No one knows where the project will lead, but the prospect of collaboration energizes the group. Brian has brought along a video about the old barns of Essex County produced by the Essex Region Conservation Authority.

"The old wooden barn - some see it as an eyesore, outdated and in need of demolition. Yet for others there is something beautiful and romantic about an old barn. Maybe it's the simplicity of its design, its harmony with its surroundings, or the aura of mystery that envelops it," begins the narrator.

The video plays on for a few minutes and then freezes. Despite Brian's intervention we're unable to watch the rest of the video.

The evening ends much like it started, with Brian urging people to take a cookie and post-meeting chatter merging quietly into good-byes.

It's only after we disband that I realize Brian hasn't shared his summer story. He tells me by phone about one of the highlights of his summer - joining his brothers at the World Crokinole Championship in Tavistock, Ont.

"You don't need to qualify, you just have to pay admission to go," he explains.

Could it inspire a story, I ask.

"Oh, sure it could," he snickers.

Aside from his annual pilgrimage to Tavistock, Brian spends much of his free time writing or talking about writing. He's

the author of *Newbridge*, a tale of life in a small town, a scriptwriter, a songwriter, and the creator of *The Story Teller*, a half-hour television show produced by Leamington's CFTV34.

When he's not writing or working as the Director of Corporate Services for the Municipality of Leamington, Brian is marveling at the artistic talent that Essex County continues to produce.

"I'm amazed at how many authors there are... I really had no idea," he says.

Two years in the making, the South Coast Writers group has grown from a small backyard gathering of three - Brian, Judith and Jim - to a disparate crowd of 30 to 40 writers.

"I think there are a lot of writers out there who are kind of like me," he says. "It's nice to meet with other writers, have an evening with other writers, where you can talk and share a lot of information about how to use the Internet, or how to go about turning your book into an e-book or an audio book, or how to go about marketing, and all these things."

There's a lot for a writer to think about these days, he admits.

To find out more about the South Coast Writers, contact Brian Sweet at bsweet@cogeco.ca.

Lessons from the Depression

A local author's successful first attempt

Darlene Gudrie Butts of Kingsville has taken her experience as a financial planner, her joy of writing and her passion to improve the lives of others and turned them into a winning combination in *Lessons From The Depression: Eliminating Debt The Old-Fashioned Way*.

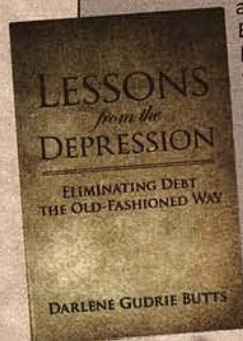
The book is the fictional tale of Tim and Tricia Smith who find themselves in dire straits due to loss of employment and real estate troubles. The story is set in contemporary times and hits the current economic conditions on the head. The story follows them as they dig themselves out of their financial pit and into successful financial management, all with the help of a grandmother. Grandma uses good old-fashioned methods learned in the depression to lead the couple to success.

Lessons From the Depression is finding its own success.

"The book is popular enough that people want to go into bookstores to buy it," says Butts.

The book was released in April and has sold over 1,000 copies so far. By the end of the year it will be available in Chapters Indigo stores. Currently it is available at Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and on Butts' web site, lessons-fromthedepression.net.

Butts is currently available for speaking engagements when she isn't working on her next book, *The Ripple Effect: a Guide for Parents, Teachers and Coaches*. She is also in the process of starting her own publishing company, Mapview Press.



Finding *my way* in the Dark

By Marc Rocheleau



Marc Rocheleau uses his white cane when in unfamiliar or public places. He and girlfriend Jan are seen here enjoying a walk in his neighbourhood.

Waking up, it takes a minute to gain my bearings. Once the drowsiness subsides, I realize I'm in my bed but don't know if it's morning or not. It's dark.

I press a button on the right side of my watch. A digital voice loudly proclaims it's 9:20 a.m. Being woken up by my mom's hair dryer in the distance is a dead giveaway that the day has begun, but when it's this quiet, it's a bit trickier.

I pull off the covers and sit up. Thinking of a movie date later tonight, my feet feel the floor for my slippers and I slide them on. Standing up, it dawns on me that exercise awaits as well, so I'd better get a move-on. For most people, these things are accomplished quickly and simply, but because of my visual impairment it takes a bit longer.

In September 2001 I'd just started the Computer Systems Technician program at St. Clair College. Random headaches and bouts of nausea began soon thereafter. By the

second week of school I was missing classes. When the problems persisted, I was admitted to Hôpital-Dieu Grace Hospital on and off for a month and a half. My symptoms kept coming and going and got much worse by October.

I have been blind in my right eye since birth. During one hospital stay, I noticed the vision in my left eye was starting to blur. Within three days, I was completely blind. I was 18.

It was a dramatic change and some of the doctors didn't make it any easier. A neuro-ophthalmologist asked me to hold a box of facial tissues and became angry when I couldn't keep it still. Another doctor suggested that I see a psychiatrist because he thought my blindness was just my mind playing tricks on me. After some arguing, the hospital sent me to the neuro-ophthalmologist's office and he found that I had damage to the optic nerve due to elevated pressure in the eye. I was given eye drops to reduce the pressure but it was too late. The damage was done.

In the weeks that followed, I was discharged and re-admitted to the hospital again, as symptoms persisted. In time, I lost my sense of smell and developed reduced sensitivity in my fingers. With doctors stumped, I was transferred to University Hospital in London. The neuro-ophthalmologist there diagnosed me with end-stage glaucoma and that's when I realized I'd never see again.

I was released before the holidays. My Christmas gift was the task of dealing with my new lifestyle.

Today I walk down the hall to the kitchen. Because I had vision for so long, I know the layout of my house without using a cane. My parents and I have never moved, so unless someone wants to get even and places a cactus in my path I'm pretty safe.

At the cupboard I reach for my pill container. I am an insulin-dependant diabetic with high cholesterol. I take at least one pill every day to control the cholesterol. There's a piece of Velcro on the Sunday a.m. slot as a reference point, so I trail my fingers to Tuesday a.m. and get the pills I need. Reaching towards the faucet and making sure it's on cold, I flip it on and fill a cup with water to wash my pills down.

Cold air touches my face when I open the fridge. I reach for the second highest shelf and the paper coffee cups on the left. For my own convenience, I buy four coffees from Tim Horton's on Sunday and refrigerate them. I slide a cup into the microwave and close it. My hand trails up to the flat buttons covered with stuck-on plastic nubs that guide me in using the microwave. The most important buttons are marked.

While my coffee heats up I pull a food tray from the cupboard and place it on the counter. Grabbing the thermal cup on the other side of the sink, I take the lid off and place everything on the tray. Despite my coffee-pouring prowess, the tray provides extra protection. It's easier to wipe the tray than to wash the counter. Just ask my mom, she knows from experience.

Flipping the tab on the hot coffee, I feel for the thermal cup and lift the paper cup until the two line up. I carefully tip the paper cup and listen closely to the coffee pour from one cup to the other. After the dripping stops, I tighten the lid on the thermal cup and make sure the spout is at the right spot. I wipe my hand across the tray to make sure there's no coffee on it – it's dry – then remove the cups and put it back in the cupboard.

I hear my mom's newspaper rustle in the living room and ask her to check my blood sugar. I have a monitor that beeps when it's ready for a blood sample. It also beeps out the reading. Eventually I'll do this myself but I haven't mastered it yet. Maybe I'm putting it off to keep "learn to do laundry" at the bottom of my to-do list.

I hear the result and measure insulin with my pens. Using cartridges and needle tops, I twist the bottom of the pens and listen – each click adds one unit of insulin. I measure with no problem. Aiming is the issue. Not wanting to injure myself, I let my mom handle the rest. My girlfriend enjoys doing this too and jokes that it's the best relationship anyone could have: No matter what, she gets to stab me and I'll thank her for it.

Today it's two shots.

My mom toasts me a bagel with cream cheese for breakfast. I take the food and head back to my room to browse the Internet. With the computer volume turned up, I press a key and the monotone voice of my narration software speaks. The program, Jaws, reads everything that's on the screen. It lets me navigate the web and various programs using keyboard shortcuts. Jaws isn't without its glitches, however, as the software pronounces words phonetically, it's very useful when I'm proofreading my own articles, but it gets annoying when I'm chatting online with friends who make spelling mistakes. Some websites are also inaccessible because of unlabelled images and the use of JavaScript, a computer language Jaws can't process.

Canadian National Institute for the Blind (CNIB) is where I heard about the software. In January 2002 I was at rock bottom. I didn't know how to proceed with learning to adapt to being blind. I needed assistance even with simple things like showering. My mom decided to call CNIB for assistance. Unfortunately, I was too stubborn to accept it at first.

When someone came to the house with a white cane, I humoured her by trying it out but refused to use it otherwise. One thing that immediately peaked my interest,

however, was a pamphlet that explained how I could be assessed for a computer through a government program that paid 75 per cent of the cost for assistive technologies. Before becoming visually impaired, I used the Internet often, and the thought of having something normal back in my life gave me hope. We had to drive to W. Ross Macdonald School for the Blind in Brantford. My parents were supportive and willing.

My pity party began to wind down and I slowly became motivated to do things for myself again. My strength started to come back and I took my first shower without assistance. I had forgotten how great something so simple could feel.

When the weather warmed up I contacted CNIB again for cane lessons. With my friends' support, I learned how to use it. This was a huge step. One buddy was actually very adamant about me using the white cane. It would've been nicer if it hadn't been because he feared people would mistake us for a gay couple. It actually happened a few years later when another friend and I were outside a bar. Some jerks driving by yelled out, "Get a room you fags!" I was using my white cane too!

Every week my cane instructor and I walked around the neighbourhood. There is a technique to using the cane. You glide it from left to right, making sure it's on the opposite side of the foot that's stepping forward. It requires some rhythm, but with some practice it became second nature. My instructor even created an obstacle course at the church hall to test my mad caning skills. I practiced going up and down stairs, around large objects and making sure a seat wasn't full of stuff before sitting down.

In July I was assessed for my computer. When my mom's co-workers heard the government wouldn't cover everything, they organized a fundraiser to make up the difference. Getting the computer made a world of difference. I finally accepted that while I was the same person, I was different and those differences could work to my advantage. The computer opened many opportunities for me.

Most of this morning is spent browsing the Internet and chatting with friends. I rely on my computer heavily for this, writing articles and keeping track of news. I also use it to organize my music. It is much easier to load mp3s than it is to fumble around with multiple CDs. My songs can also be uploaded to my mp3 player, which can be hooked up to a speaker and listened to away from the computer.

After lunch I exercise on a cardio machine downstairs, do free-weight exercises and sit-ups. Unlike many visually impaired people, I'm not comfortable taking walks by myself and I need to remain active somehow.

After I got my computer, my co-op boss from high school, Phillip Rutledge, contacted me. He'd come to visit me at the hospital when I was sick and we had stayed in touch. He wanted to see how my computer worked. After showing him a bit, we talked some more and he offered me a job with his website. The site was about Lakeshore and I was given the task of creating their e-mail newsletter. With this experience I learned a valuable lesson: Always treat people well and do your best at any job because you never know how it may come back to affect you in the future.

After exercising, I come upstairs where my mom tells me I stink. I guess having no sense of smell has its advantages. I go back downstairs to the washroom and hop in the shower. It has bars to grab and a seat that makes things easier.

After my shower, I go upstairs to get ready for my date. My girlfriend Jan and I will hang around until it's time to meet a couple of friends at the movies after dinner. I met one friend at St. Clair College and the other is her date.

It took me a while to make friends in college. Actually, my experience there started badly. I'd developed a passion for writing while working for Phil's website. My dad was encouraging me to go back to college but I didn't want to work in computers anymore. One of Phil's friends was the editor of a county newspaper and taught at St. Clair College in the journalism program. She agreed to meet with me and seemed confident that I could manage in the program, despite the required photography and video-editing classes.

The head of journalism at the time wasn't as supportive. She told me I couldn't get a diploma because of these classes and refused to meet in person. Not satisfied, I applied to the program anyway. I was accepted into journalism but the fight wasn't over. The head of creative arts and sciences saw that I was blind and requested a meeting. Leery about me going into journalism, she proposed a custom-made schedule with journalism classes. At the end of two semesters, I'd get a general arts and sciences certificate.

My first semester in college was stressful to say the least. Phil closed his website so I had more time for assignments but found making friends was difficult. Being sighted, it's easy to walk up to someone and say "hi," but when you're blind, you don't always know if someone is even in front of you. As a result, I was nervous and only three people spoke to me. One went to my high school.

I needed people to bring me to my classes. I'd practiced the layout of the college with my cane instructor but I wasn't comfortable walking the crowded hallways alone. The teacher had to ask for volunteers to guide me and I usually ended up having to trust complete strangers. Most times it worked out but in other situations it was a nightmare. Someone guiding me once ran through the halls, kept knocking me into things and bent down to tie her shoe, leaving me in the crowded hallway when she just walked away afterwards.

In second semester I missed several classes when I was hospitalized with pneumonia. It was a turning point for me. One of my friends told everyone, got teachers and students to sign cards, and four girls from journalism came to visit. After returning home, I used our course mailing list to thank everyone and provided my MSN messenger contact information in case anyone wanted to chat. Several people added me and I was included in a great circle of friends. People started talking more in class and I even met my current girlfriend.

At the end of my first year I had another meeting with the head of creative arts and sciences and the new head of the journalism program. They agreed I had earned the right to get a journalism diploma. Since I'd done so well in my first year in the program, they would accommodate my needs to make sure I'd get what I wanted. In my second year, I used previous experiences to help benefit our Multi-Media Journalism Club and CNIB. With a group of students I covered one of their events and created videos about a day in my life

and guiding techniques. The latter spoofed the shoe-tying incident and other disasters. College taught me how to cope by laughing at these absurd situations. By the end of that year I still had some classes to take. In my third semester I was voted Multi-Media Journalism Club president. I'd come a long way from being refused entry into the program. I graduated in June 2007.

I can tell we're trailing someone going below the speed limit on our way to the theatre. I can feel it in the way the car is moving, and Jan's profanity level is rising. Tonight is cheap ticket night, which generally means a sea of teenagers will make this a challenge. As we meet our friends and enter, however, I am surprised by the low volume-level. With school having started, the crowds aren't anywhere near as bad as they were in the summer.

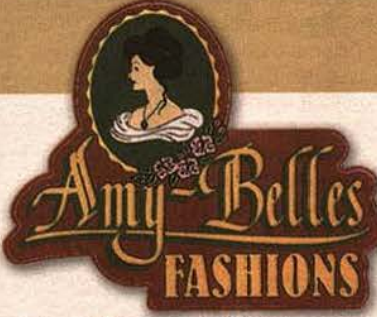
The noise of popcorn popping and the chatter of voices make concentrating difficult at times but those busy summer nights were much worse. It's often hard to move in large crowds and it becomes nerve-wracking when I can't hear Jan navigating. One interesting side effect, however, is how easy it is to hear other conversations. This is how I know the theatre is usually packed with teenagers. I can tell by the way they talk. They use slang like "Dude, that's sick!" and a lot of profanity. Hearing others talk about waiting for a ride or catching a bus while yelling loudly to their friends is also a tell-tale sign.

I had asked Jan to keep an eye on how people react around me. After settling into our seats, she tells me that everyone was generally considerate. Nobody bothered moving an inch for Jan but, after realizing she was guiding a visually impaired person, they parted like the Red Sea.

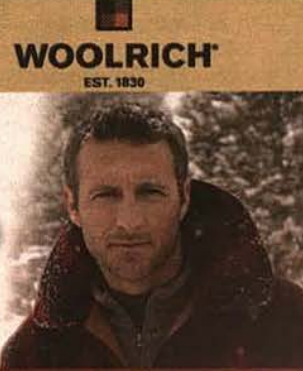
Nobody hassles us when Jan has to describe the movie. With some films there is a descriptive video headset that narrates what's happening between the dialogue, but they don't have it at this theatre.

After the movie the four of us go for coffee. Inside the coffee shop it's quiet. I can even hear the barely audible music from the radio. We chat for awhile and I'm able to concentrate on the discussion due to the lack of background noise. The only thing distracting me is the beeping behind the counter as food and beverages are prepared.

Two hours later Jan and I head back to my house on an empty expressway. I don't hear any passing cars. At home we both get ready for bed and call it a night. She takes the spare room and I head to my own room. I close my eyes and realize that an ordinary day of my uncommon situations ends the same way it all unfolds, in darkness.



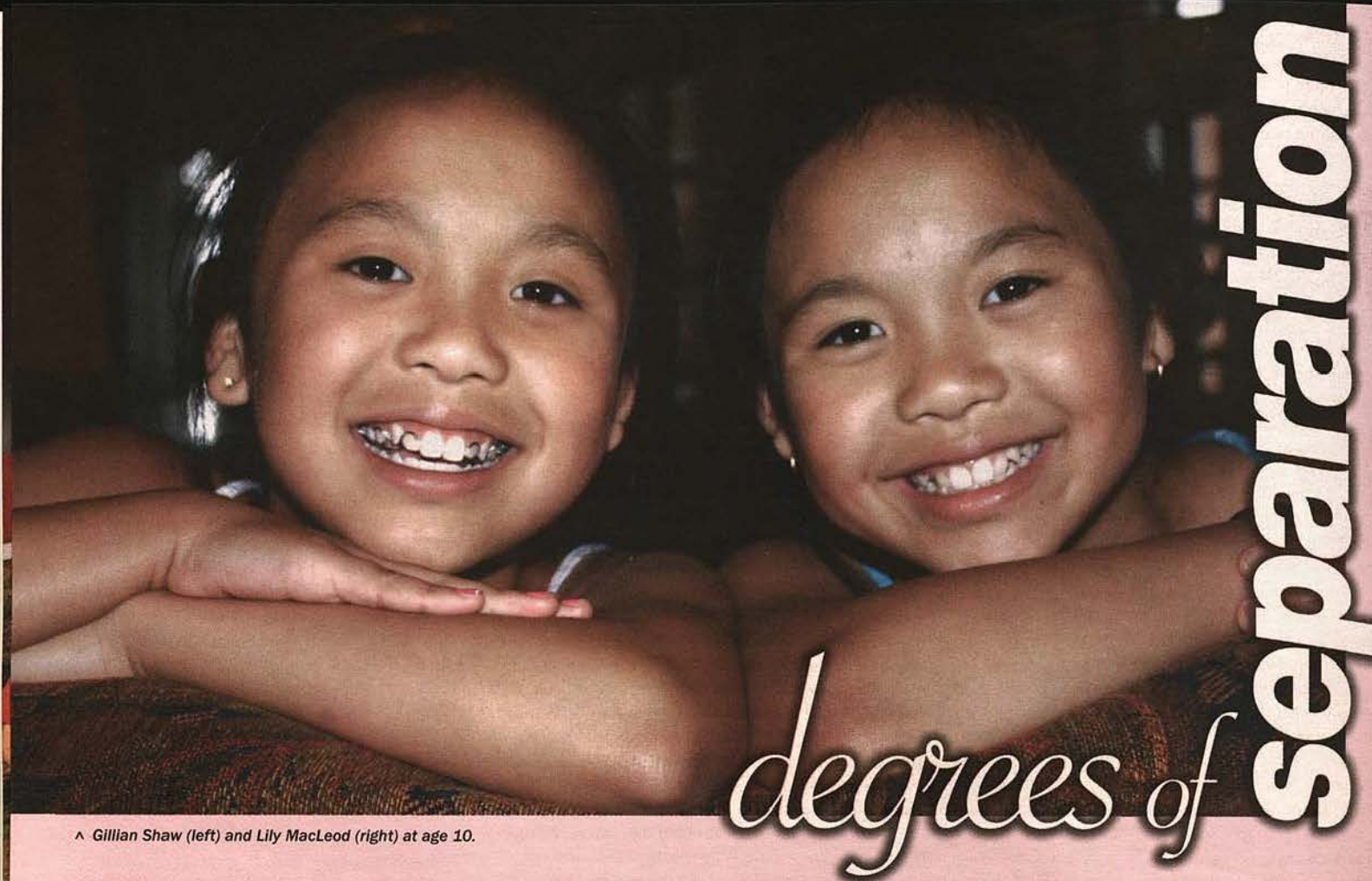
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▲ Gillian Shaw (left) and Lily MacLeod (right) at age 10.

degrees of separation

Two families share a unique bond

By Jennifer Cranston

Gillian Shaw and Lily MacLeod are 10 years old. They share roots in China, a fear of clowns and a love of music. They share a flare for drawing. They even share DNA. They do not live together, but thanks to their parents, the most important thing they share is a relationship.

Gillian and Lily are twins. They were separated at the time of their birth in China and reunited in a unique way through adoption.

In 1998, Mike and Lynnette Shaw of Amherstburg began the slow process of adopting a baby from China. Kirk and Allyson MacLeod, from the Toronto area, were also hoping to adopt from China. They were both working with an adoption facilitator called Children's Bridge.

The agency grouped sets of parents based on which orphanage their children would come from. On Christmas Eve 1999, each couple received a package containing information on their soon-to-be daughters along with medical information and photographs.

During the preceding year the four parents had met frequently with each other and other parents in their group and had developed a relationship. It was only natural for all of these parents to start emailing each other pictures of their new babies.

Mike and Lynnette and Allyson and Kirk immediately noticed that their babies were extremely similar in appearance. Both little girls were born on June 26, 1999. Could they have been assigned the same child or were they twins?

Children's Bridge contacted China and the officials there denied that the girls were related.

Lynnette suggested that they wait until they get to China and see what happens from there.

In February 2000 the Shaws, the MacLeods, and the other couples in their group flew to China and waited in a hotel for their babies to arrive. Gillian and Lily were eight months old and it was still very clear that these children were identical. So the parents asked again if the girls were related. They were able to speak to the nannies who had cared for the babies. They also denied that the girls were related but admitted that the girls were so similar in appearance that they had kept them in separate rooms so as to tell them apart.

"We knew in our hearts that they were twins and that we had to maintain the connection," said Mike. "We had to become an extended family."

Interesting commonalities arose right away when the two mothers unknowingly dressed their daughters in the same outfit on the same day during their stay in China.

"It took your breath away just to see how eerie it was," said Lynnette. "It was within the first week that we had the girls."

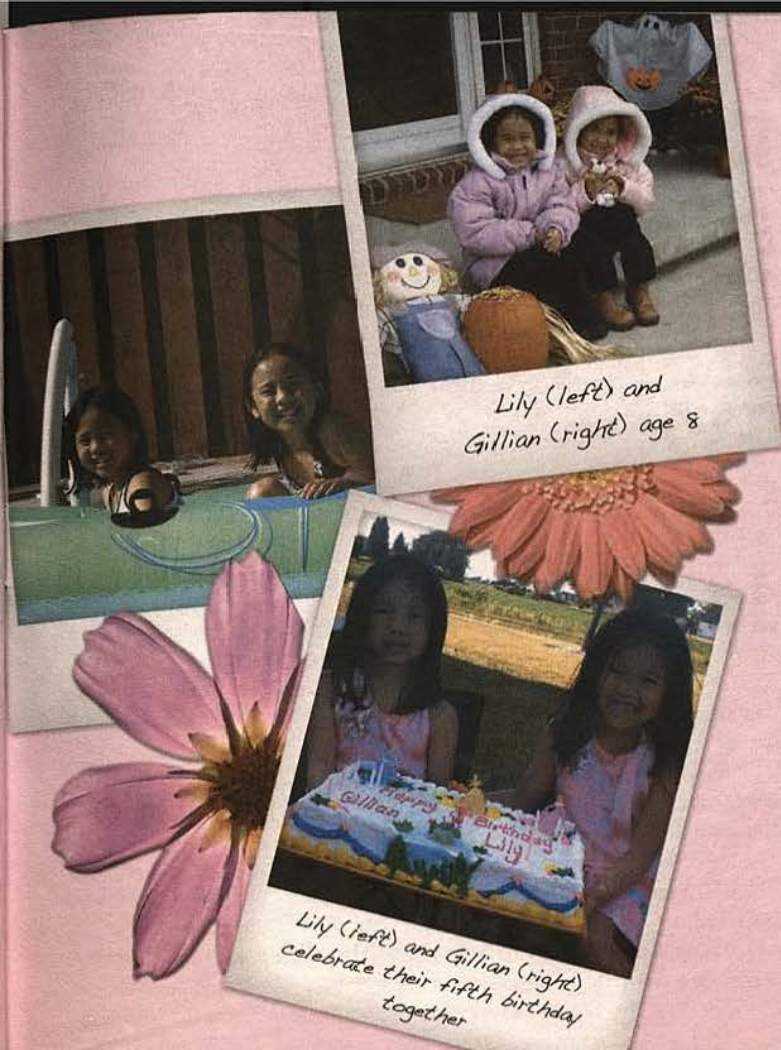
Upon their return to Canada, the Shaws and the MacLeods began visiting back and forth as often as they could, so the girls got to see each other every few weeks. Just last year the girls began visiting each other on their own.

Gillian and Lily have grown up with a strong bond, as you would expect from twins.

"I like spending time with (Lily). We play and talk a lot," said Gillian. "If she was not related to me she would probably be one of my best friends."

In 2001 Allyson contacted twin expert, researcher and author Nancy L. Segal who included the story of Gillian and Lily in her book *Indivisible By Two: Lives of Extraordinary Twins* published in 2005. In the course of her research, Segal had the girls' DNA compared to confirm that they were indeed twins. Segal calls the girls a "research treasure."

Twins have often been used in "nature versus nurture" studies. They are a great resource for researchers to discover which characteristics and personality traits are learned or inherited. Gillian and Lily's situation is highly unique because, unlike



Lily (left) and
Gillian (right) age 8

Lily (left) and Gillian (right)
celebrate their fifth birthday
together

the stories of separated twins not reunited until adulthood, these girls are growing up in different families yet knowing each other as sisters and twins.

Lily is an only child. Kirk and Allyson are both ordained ministers. From the moment they brought Lily home, Allyson has been a stay-at-home mom.

Gillian has an older brother, Eric, who is 14, and an older sister, Heather, who is 15. Both Mike and Lynnette work outside the home.

Despite their very different family lives, the girls share some amazing similarities. They still look and sound enough alike to be able to confuse people. When the girls are together they like to switch clothes and try to fool people.

"Parents can tell," said Mike. "Sometimes we have to take a second look or a second listen."

"They can mix up the grandparents pretty well," said Lynnette.

Gillian and Lily share many of the same mannerisms and personality traits. They took their first steps on the same day. They caught chicken pox within a day of each other. They both love to draw. They both fear clowns. One year they both dressed as ballerinas for Halloween without knowing what the other had planned. They have bought each other the same cards and gifts.

"Their likes and dislikes are very similar," said Lynnette.

Twins though they may be, there are some differences. Gillian leans toward athletic endeavours and Lily toward artistic activities.

"Lily's taller than me," said Gillian. "She can sing a lot better than me."

Gillian admits that she is a better swimmer than her sister.

When the Shaws adopted Gillian, they not only came home with a daughter, but they also came home with a whole new extended family. And they wouldn't change a thing.

"The family wasn't complete," said Mike. "She was the last piece of our puzzle."

There is one area where the Shaw family is certain of the answer to the "nature versus nurture" question.

For them there is no difference between their biological children and Gillian.

"I look at Eric, Heather or Gillian and that's my child," said Mike.

"There is no difference between biological and adoption," said Lynnette. Mike and Lynnette are strong proponents of adoption.

"People don't get it," said Mike. "The bond is not genetic."

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CANADA'S GAME SHAPES ESSEX COUNTY'S IDENTITY

A LOOK INSIDE OUR NATIONAL TREASURE

By Kevin Wickham

Its roots predate our history as a country.

Over the last 200 years, over 60 nation states have adopted our sport. It's our gift to the world.

But make no mistake: those inside the game locally view this steel on ice spectacle as our game. We invented and coddled it; we determined the landscape, rules and confined borders of play. It is our most pronounced protectionist foible.

From ponds to lakes, driveways to arenas, hockey is the winter passion that connects us as Canadians, from coast to coast to coast. It always has. It always will.

Former Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau once said, "Canada is a country whose main exports are hockey players and cold fronts." Hockey is a sport inextricably linked to this vast country and its geography. According to most historical accounts, hockey started around the turn of the 19th century in Windsor, Nova Scotia, as an adaptation of the Irish field game of hurling, in which players used wooden sticks called hurleys. Unable to play in the snow, the summer game was transferred to the frozen ponds of King's College School, an all-boys academy.

There is a great deal of conjecture and argument about why we call the game "hockey". Some references say the sport derived from the French word "hocquet", meaning a shepherd's crook, an implement that resembles a hockey stick. Still other accounts point to an English military officer, a colonel, who made his soldiers play the game for exercise. His name was Colonel Hockey. The soldiers would say, "Let's go play Hockey's game."

To better understand what the sport means in contemporary Canada, and specifically Essex County, Spotlight on Essex County spoke to six area hockey personalities, two each from the player and coaching ranks, a general manager and a president of a minor hockey association. Subjects discussed ranged from the almost cult following that Canadians have for our national winter sport, to musings about why our local junior teams have been so successful recently at the provincial and national levels, to whether hockey is becoming too costly and what, if anything, needs to be done to make it more affordable.

He's a seven-time Great Lakes Junior C league champion coach with the Essex 73's, and has won three provincial titles - 2002, 2005 and 2009. A former goaltender for the Windsor Spitfires, Tony Piroski also coached professionally in the International Hockey League. Growing up in Essex, Piroski says hockey was a staple in his life.

"It's something that we grew up watching, Hockey Night in Canada. They didn't call it Hockey Night in the World. It was on our channel nine, and it was Canadian," Piroski says.

The coach clearly appreciates the finesse needed of a hockey player.

"The attraction is the speed of the game," he says. "It's a sport that is played where you are moving with the help of a pair of skates. They're not running shoes or football shoes or baseball shoes or basketball shoes. There is actually a skill in the skating itself, let alone playing the game of hockey."

Taylor Hall, the 17-year-old scoring phenom of the Windsor Spitfires, was born in Calgary, on skates at three, and moved with his family to

Kingston at age 13. The International Scout Service and the Red Line Report rate him as the world's top prospect for next June's National Hockey League draft.

"I think it's just in our blood. Canadians are passionate people. We take a lot of pride in things we do and hockey is something we are very good at," Hall says.

Hall has represented Canada three times internationally, on three different teams, winning gold on each occasion.

"Canadians are very respected around the world. I know - I've talked to kids on Finnish teams and their coaches are always preaching to play like the Canadians," said Hall.

U of W Lancer women's head coach Jim Hunter understands Canada's hockey reputation. Hunter is a provincial champion coach as well, with the Tecumseh Chiefs of the Junior B ranks back in 2008.

"Each country has their dominance in certain sports and ours is definitely in the hockey end of it," Hunter explains. "It's what we're known for across the world. It's something that we're not willing to relinquish."

Hall's general manager with the Spitfires, Warren Rychel, was the architect of the team's Memorial Cup title last season. He feels hockey is a part of every Canadian, regardless of their background. After playing in the NHL, winning a Stanley Cup in 1996 with the Colorado Avalanche, and retiring in 1999, Rychel had many options regarding where to live once his playing days ended, but he chose to return to his roots in Essex County.

"I always loved the area. We had an opportunity to live anywhere we wanted, L.A. or Colorado, but we always knew we would come back here and make it home. In my opinion the best kept secret in Canada is Windsor

With Rychel's Spitfires, Hunter's Chiefs, and Piroski's 73's each winning provincial titles in the last two years, Essex County has the distinction of being the only area of the province able to make this claim. So is it something in the water, just a coincidence or maybe something else?

and Essex County," Rychel says.

Like Hall, teammate Adam Henrique, a slick fourth year forward on the Spits, is not from Essex County. He is a native of Burford, a bedroom community of Brantford. Henrique started playing the nation's passion at age four. His biggest influence was his older brother Michael. The 19-year-old NHL draft pick of the New Jersey Devils still remembers the omnipresence of the sport but he didn't know much about Essex County before being drafted by Windsor.

"I really didn't know too much about the (Essex County) area before I came here. In minor hockey we played Windsor and Sun County a couple of times a year but I never thought I would be playing OHL hockey here one day. Since I've been here I've learned to love the city," Henrique says.

Hall echoes Henrique's sentiments.

"I think the biggest thing was the (Memorial Cup) parade. There were probably 20,000 people out there on the streets. Essex County has been great to me. I love it here," Hall says.

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"That's a good question," Rychel opines. "I don't know if there's a direct correlation. I think over and over, the players are getting better and better all the time, right from Sun County AAA and Windsor Midget AAA. Hockey is alive and well here, especially with Sun County being at the new Essex Arena."

When Hunter coached the Chiefs to the Sutherland Cup in 2008, it was the first time in 75 years that an Essex County team had claimed the top Junior B prize in the province. He believes it is the commitment of the local coaches that translates to winning.

"If you look at Tony and the time that he puts in and the recruiting that he does, and then you look at a guy like Bobby Boughner with the Spitfires, and the experience that he's had, there were a lot of people who were skeptical when he took over, saying he wasn't experienced enough. He put together a great staff. What it comes down to – it's not that this area is any different than London or any other area, but at this given time you've got some coaches that want to understand the game, that want to know the game and put so much work into it," Hunter says.

Piroski feels the local results are based on the infrastructure of each club.

"What it does mean is we have some pretty well run organizations in this area, at all the different levels," he says.

Despite all the positives and iconic acclaim of today's helmeted gladiators, there is a rising storm on the horizon, one based on socioeconomics. Hockey, in some circles, is being called an elitist sport, too expensive for a lot of families to afford. The price of skates and sticks and primarily ice time costs, have created a tiered local sport.

"It is a very expensive sport, I don't deny that," says Michele Bradt, President of the Essex Minor Hockey Association for the last seven years.

According to Bradt, the cost of one year of EMHA house league, depending on the age group, is in the range of \$395 to \$600. It went up this year about \$5 to \$10. In Bantam and Midget, players have 36 games per year. In Atom and Pee Wee, they play 20 games. Two hours of ice time per week are included in the price. For travel hockey, an additional \$100 per month for extra ice time and additional travel and accommodation costs for tournaments and games, can bring a triple A player's parents' bill to well over \$5,000.

Hunter is well aware of the cost increases in ice time. He attributes it to all the new arenas in Essex County.

"It's not the equipment. It's not the game," says Hunter, who played junior hockey with the Peterborough Petes in the early 80s. "The reason hockey is just driving up the price is we're building the W.F.C.U.'s. We're building the new arenas in Essex. We're twinning arenas in Forest Glade and South Windsor. We are putting so much capital into the game, because the demand is there. That's why the price goes up," Hunter says.

In the last decade, ice time costs have more than doubled in some are-

nas. A usual fee to play per hour used to be \$100. Now you can find rinks charging over \$200 for 60 minutes. With these financial road blocks standing in the way of the sport's development, Piroski would like to see a return to his youth. Back in the 60s, 70s and 80s, it wasn't uncommon in Essex County to have four months of weather conducive to ponds and rivers freezing over. Today, even in the Great White North of Essex County, our weather patterns don't allow that Canadian mosaic to grace our landscape.

"I would love to see more of that pond hockey," says Piroski. "I think back in the old days that's where the better players learned how to play... the non-structured shinny!"

As far as changes to the current game, Hunter feels accountability has always been a tenet he had to live by as a player, and now as a coach. Unfortunately, he says, the referees have never had to play by that same code.

"In our game today, every single person is accountable for what they do except for referees," says Hunter. "You can't say anything to them, can't print anything about them, and they have more impact on the game than some coaches. It's amazing, but that's the way it is, and I don't think that is ever going to change."

Despite the inflationary costs affecting the sport, Canada is still the pre-eminent world leader in producing talent to the professional ranks. On the opening week of the 2009-2010 NHL season, 53 per cent of the players on pro rosters were Canadian. Sidney Crosby and hockey were both born in Nova Scotia. At only 22 years old he is considered to be the game's best talent, having already won a scoring title and a Stanley Cup. He will be the central figure on Canada's entry on the biggest global stage possible, the Winter Olympics this February in Vancouver.

With Hockey Night in Canada and sports cable giant The Sports Network providing in depth coverage of our passion for pucks on a weekly basis, the iconic legends of our nation's obsession will run through the vein that pulsates with our inner-most fervour and the word "hockey" will always appear in the definition of "Canada."

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